

## Claims

- [c1]        1. A method of producing a gum, the method comprising the steps of:  
            providing a plurality of gum ingredients at least including a base portion  
            and a bulk sweetener;  
            processing the gum ingredients to form a gum material defining a gum  
            surface; and  
            heating the gum material at a temperature effective to caramelize the bulk  
            sweetener on at least a portion of the gum surface.
- [c2]        2. The method of Claim 1 further comprising the steps of cooling the gum  
            material subsequent to heating and forming a coating layer on the gum surface  
            including the bulk sweetener that has caramelized.
- [c3]        3. The method of Claim 1 wherein the bulk sweetener is selected from the  
            group consisting of sugar bulk sweeteners and sugarless bulk sweeteners.
- [c4]        4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the gum material is heated at the  
            temperature and over a time period effective to sear the gum surface.
- [c5]        5. The method of Claim 1 wherein an additional bulk sweetener is applied  
            to the gum surface of the gum material prior to heating.
- [c6]        6. The method of Claim 5 wherein the gum material is heated to allow  
            caramelization of the bulk sweetener and the additional bulk sweetener on at  
            least a portion of the gum surface.
- [c7]        7. The method of Claim 6 further comprising the steps of cooling the gum  
            material subsequent to heating and forming a coating layer with the bulk  
            sweetener and additional bulk sweetener that has hardened and caramelized.
- [c8]        8. The method of Claim 5 wherein the additional bulk sweetener is selected  
            from the group consisting of a saccharide-containing component, a sugar  
            alcohol and combinations thereof.
- [c9]        9. The method of Claim 1 wherein the gum material is formed into a shape  
            selected from the group consisting of a chunk, a pellet, a ball, and a tab prior to

a heating.

- [c10] 10. The method of Claim 1 wherein the gum is selected from the group consisting of a chewing gum and a bubble gum.
- [c11] 11. A method of forming a coating layer on a gum comprising the steps of:  
providing a gum material at least including a base portion and a bulk sweetener wherein the gum material has a definable shape with a gum surface;  
searing the gum material at a temperature and over a period of time effective to allow caramelization of the bulk sweetener on at least a portion of the gum surface; and  
cooling the gum product at an effective cooling temperature to form a coating layer on the gum surface wherein the coating layer includes an amount of the bulk sweetener that has caramelized.
- [c12] 12. The method of Claim 11 further comprising the steps of adding an additional bulk sweetener to the gum surface prior to heating and subsequently forming the coating layer with the bulk sweetener and the additional bulk sweetener that have caramelized and hardened.
- [c13] 13. The method of Claim 12 wherein the bulk sweetener and the additional bulk sweetener are selected from the group consisting of a saccharide-containing component, a sugar alcohol and combinations thereof.
- [c14] 14. The method of Claim 11 wherein the definable shape of the gum material is selected from the group consisting of a chunk, a pellet and a tab.
- [c15] 15. A coated gum comprising:  
a gum center including at least a base portion and a bulk sweetener; and  
a layer surrounding the gum center comprising a caramelized bulk sweetener.
- [c16] 16. The coated gum of Claim 15 wherein the coated gum is selected from the group consisting of a bubble gum and a chewing gum.
- [c17] 17. The coated gum of Claim 15 wherein the definable shape of the gum material is selected from the group consisting of a chunk, a tab, a ball, and a

**pellet.**

- [c18]        18. The coated gum of Claim 15 wherein the bulk sweetener is selected from the group consisting of a saccharide-containing component, a sugar alcohol and combinations thereof.
- [c19]        19. The coated gum of Claim 15 wherein the bulk sweetener comprises about 40% or more by weight of the gum material.
- [c20]        20. The coated gum of Claim 15 wherein the coating layer includes the bulk sweetener and an additional bulk sweetener applied to the gum surface prior to caramelization.